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RADIO TALK -- December 3, 1943

Last week you heard the Reverend Mr. Berry discuss pl ns for the restoration of the old McDougall church in Edmonton. This is a worthy project. Far too many of the historic buildings of Alberta have been torn down, or allowed to rot away, with no thought of their importance as historic landmarks. Could this old church, as Mr. Berry suggested, be moved from its present location behind Alberta College in Edmonton, to a more public position, and could it serve as a church museum, housing the many relics of frontier days, reminiscent of the important part the churches played in the settlement of this country, it would be a fine thing. Children especially need to view the relics of the past in order to better understand the present. Let's give the generations to come a break, by preserving as many of the historic landmarks as we possibly can.

Well, tonight I thought I'd continue with some other tales of Alberta.....tales that seem to me to be among the best that the Alberta folk have made. Tonight I am going to tell you first, the facisinating tale of Charcoal, the Indian murderer and bad-man. Charcoal was really a bad man, and once he got started he kept things hot for a long while down in the south.

An Entirely different
~~Another~~ type of ~~story~~

~~Among the~~ other unsolved mysteries of the Peace River Country is the famous Snyder Murder Case, which perhaps caused more local excitment in the Grande Prairie district than any other event..

Snyder was a recluse who lived in a shack about four miles from town. The day before the murder he was visited by his nephew from England,, who came into Grande Prairie,, asked where the old man lived,, and apparently went immediately out to see his uncle. Near moring the following day,, neighbors saw flames shooting up through the roof of the Snyder place,, and rushing over they burst in the door,, succeeded in putting out the fire which was only getting a good start. When the smoke cleared out the neighbors saw,, to their horror,, the body of old Snyder lying across a box.. There was a thirty-eight calibre relover at his side. Near the uncle's body lay the body of the nephew,, shot through the forehead.. The uncle had also been shot,, exactly in the same way.. The obvious conclusion was " murder and suicide"..... for outside in the grass,, were the marks of a struggle,, and in the dew were two marks,, as though a human body had been dragged to the cabin.

An hour or so after the discovery of the tragedy at the Snyder farm,, another neighbor came rushing up with more terrible news.. At the Parachosky farm,, three miles away,, the bdies of four men had been found in the barn,, each shot through the forehead in exactly the same way as the Snyders.. Here,, however,, there was no evidence of a struggle,..... the whole affair was a complete mystery. There was no weapon found at the Parachosky place..

You may be sure that the killing of six men in a single night in a frontier community as sparsely settled as Grande Prairie

was at the time,, is a cause for great excitement and panic. For days the citizens of the countryside went armed to the teeth, thinking that some unnatural monster was loose among them. The Police investigated.....but to no avail. No adequate motive could be found.....one man was brought to trial,, but the evidence was so slight that he was very soon released. Much legend has grown up about this mass murder.....the explaination that some hold: that Old Snyder killed the four men, that his nephew discovered his uncle's crime, and that the uncle shot the newphew and and then himself.....seems too obvious.....The whole thing lies in darkness,, and has for a generation..... But the Mounted police never give up. I am told they are still working on the case. If they can discover the truth, it will ease the minds of many in the Peace River Country.

So I leave you with these two mysteries of the north. You figure out the answers.....and send me some of the good tales you know about the Alberta countryside. Address me,, R. Gard. Dept Extension University of Alberta

When I went to see John Sweeney at his Xxxxxxx homestead near the xxxx Peace River town of Fairview, he explained to me: " There'll always be an Ireland, and there'll always be a poet burns!." Those are two of the thing that'll help keep this old ball of mud r olling;....if anything will."

To Sweeney, who will be eighty years old on April 14, writing poetry has always been easy.....so easy, if fact that for a long time now, he has been known as Bard o' the north. He once wrote for me an outline of his life which he titled: "Outline of Sweeney's life---so far." And it has been an extremely interesting life! xxxxxxxxx, first of all, Irishman, then lumberman, then prospector....and he found gold!... unfortunately he once had to pay a thousand dollars worth of gold for a single match, when he and another man were lost off the trail. Finally, homesteader and farmer in the Peace River Country...where, he explains, he has been ever since. When I went to see Sweeney he said: "Yes, " I'm still here, defending freedom of thought, and doing the best I can. It's hard, these days, to make any apt comments on the sweltering mass of humanity. If I could get somebody to publish xx my poetry, mayby that would be of some help. But it costs money to print poetry, and Old Father Time never waits. I write mostly about things I've experienced, or people I've known...and I've known some interesting rascals. Take, for instance, "OHIO BILL". I went on the oil rush with Bill to Fort Norman in 1922. He later departed with considerable of my hard cash. But that's all right. I made up a poem about it anyway.